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158

Papers respecting the Construction of Turkish Railways in Asia Minor.

No. 1.

Remarks by Sir W. White applying to different British Schemes for the Construction of Turkish Railways in Asia.

LORD SALISBURY has sent me the copy of a communication made by Mr. Pender to His Imperial Majesty the Sultan on the subject of railways. I have seen Mr. Vere, who is the agent of the Eastern Telegraph Company, and have ascertained from him that he has spoken to the Grand Vizier on this question, but I do not see any immediate prospect of the attention of the Porte being given just now to any Asiatic railway scheme.

Every few weeks some scheme of this kind is talked of at Pera, and some foreign Ambassador is credited with giving it an immense amount of support, whilst an active and energetic agent is supposed to be on the eve of success, after which he takes his departure, and the entire scheme, which was to be so successful, drifts into obscurity and is forgotten.

At this present moment there are still two such schemes in the field, one English and the other French. The former is the project for the extension of the Ismidt-Haidar Pasha Railway; the latter, the French one, is that of M. Donon, of the "Société des Dépôts et Comptes Courants," which has, however, been losing ground latterly.

Instructions were sent me with regard to the above in Foreign Office despatches Nos. 111 and 118 of the 6th and 17th May, in the latter of which was inclosed a Memorandum by Mr. John Staniforth.

As Lord Salisbury has expressed a wish to hear what I have to say on the subject of the various Asiatic railway schemes, I propose speaking my mind openly in this Memorandum with that freedom to which his Lordship has accustomed me for some years past.

The Turkish railways in Asia are a subject of primary importance to us, not only commercially, but also politically and strategically, and on that account we should be bound to give to any scheme which embraced all these different interests a very considerable amount of support.

Indeed, in the year 1872 a Parliamentary Committee sat on the Euphrates Valley Railway, and the advisability of giving material support, or even a guarantee, to such a railway had already been advocated at that time.

More than thirty years have elapsed since the Treaty of Paris, and eight British Ambassadors have been here since. The importance of this question has been felt all along without obtaining any practical result. Future historians will, no doubt, wonder how so few important results were accomplished after the conclusion of the Crimean War, when British interest in the East was still fresh, and our influence paramount and shared only with France.

But without any digression, I think no argument is needed to prove the truth of the following propositions:—

1. It is an essentially British interest that there should be railway communications established throughout Asiatic Turkey.

2. It is desirable that this should be a British enterprise, and should not fall into French or Franco-Russian hands.

3. It is essential that it should be a sound financial undertaking, and should not require or expect any material support whatever from Her Majesty's Government.

4. The great difficulties for obtaining a Concession of this kind must not be overlooked, and the alleged propitious disposition of the Sultan, knowing his irresolute and suspicious character, must not be counted for too much in its favour.

Lord Salisbury has been told that the Sultan himself has suggested the desirability of a British proposal being put forward, and his surprise at none being forthcoming, whilst "agents of various nationalities, French, German, &c., supported by their Diplomatic Representatives, were pressing for extensive Concessions and commercial advantages."

In this form the above assertions appear to me strongly open to doubt.

It is true that His Imperial Majesty has spoken to me myself occasionally, and to the Right Honourable J. Chamberlain nine months ago, at an audience he gave him, at greater length, on the subject of Asiatic railways, but it was always in general terms, and asking for assistance and advice, but never in the precise form which is now reported.

As to foreigners pressing for a Concession, there has been for some months only one, namely, M. Donon, whose chances are reported as being at a rather low ebb at this moment.

There is no foreign Company in existence in the Turkish provinces in Asia, and the four short lines there are every one held by British capitalists, as may be seen, with other particulars about them, in Mr. Bax-Ironside's Report which accompanied my despatch No. 18, Commercial, of the 2nd April last.

What happens generally is that some enterprising stranger arrives at Constantinople (I am not speaking of our countrymen alone), hears railway schemes favourably spoken of, and is assured by local friends that, if he can secure powerful diplomatic support, an advantageous Concession is sure to repay his trouble. He sets to work directly to insure this, quite regardless of the numerous other difficulties which have to be surmounted, and it is only then that he finds out that the real support which is of any value must be got at the Palace, and that for money, the price being under such circumstances enhanced by increasing competition. An unsuccessful contractor goes away disappointed after months of fruitless exertions, and makes his own Embassy responsible for his failure.

Both in Servia and in Roumania (in the former not so very long ago) foreign support had been instrumental in obtaining railway Concessions which were ultimately the cause, by failing to perform their obligations, of much internal trouble and considerable pecuniary loss to those young kingdoms, whilst the countries which gave these Companies diplomatic support and patronage suffered for a long time afterwards in loss of influence.

The proceedings of Baron Hirsch in Turkey are well known, and gave a fatal blow to the confidence formerly felt by Turks in foreign promoters.

It is not easy to judge from a distance the difficulties in obtaining railway Concessions in Turkey, and the greatest of these is the Sultan himself, as no one can say positively whether His Majesty is really desirous to have an extensive network of railways constructed in Asia, or whether he is not. The Sultan always speaks as if he were, but very well informed persons doubt his sincerity in the matter, and affirm the contrary.

At any rate, to overcome His Majesty's hesitation, a novel mode of proceeding has lately been introduced in pressing a project of this kind on his attention, as they have to be accompanied with an offer of a ready sum to be advanced to the Imperial Treasury as an equivalent for real or ideal advantages to be secured by the Concession. If such an offer comes at a moment when the Treasury is particularly pinched for money it may help to carry the point, though even this is not always certain.

A similar method was followed by the Smyrna-Cassaba Railway Company for the purpose of obtaining an extension in 1885, and is again being tried by the Haidar Pasha Company for a similar object.

This method of temptation by advances in cash to the Imperial Government does not exclude, however, the extensive use which has to be made all the same of "backshish" for the purpose of gaining the support of influential persons; and in this lies, in my opinion, the chief and almost insurmountable impediment which militates against a British Embassy coming forward as the patron and active supporter

of railway or any other Concessions in which money has to be spent in this way in the Ottoman Empire.

But whenever the Asiatic lines come to be spoken of, I cannot help feeling that we have no single adequate general scheme which we could recommend conscientiously without pledging ourselves for this or that Concession, but only on general political grounds. By this omission there is a danger that minor lines may be adopted, or even constructed, which will either not tally with such an extensive scheme of real practical utility, or that even foreign competition may step in to modify its purpose disadvantageously for our political or strategical interest.

Our main interest lies in a railway line joining the port of Alexandretta with some place on the Persian Gulf, and taking in the points of most importance in Asia.

In one sense even the Ismidt-Haidar Pasha Railway is considered by some persons as not properly coming within the framework which it is our interest to see constructed, but Her Majesty's Embassy has been told repeatedly by the Foreign Office to support its extension.

Our present system of supporting Concessions without any regard to our general interests appears to me objectionable, and would be called by a German "planlos."

It was to obviate the encouragement of such partial and possibly contradictory schemes that Mr. Chamberlain advised the Sultan to appoint a Commission of foreign engineers, to be recommended by their Governments, who would work out a regular practical scheme of a network for Asiatic Turkey, with accurate statistical Tables of the income which might be derived from such lines, after which it would be possible to seek the support of a sound financial Syndicate for their construction.

In my humble opinion, it is highly desirable that Her Majesty's Government should call for such a preparatory scheme from our own Intelligence Department, who would no doubt be able to give valuable confidential advice as to what it is desirable for us to support, and what to eschew, with regard to these railways, after which the Foreign Office would have a basis enabling it to give specific instructions to this Embassy as the occasion might arise.

Similar advice is given to the Porte by a local journalist in an article of which an extract is inclosed.

(Signed) W. A. WHITE.

Therapia, July 21, 1887.

Inclosure in No. 1.

Extract from the "Levant Herald" of July 4, 1887.

M. DONON est retourné à Paris. Nous ne prétendons pas savoir jusqu'à quel point sa présence ici a pu avantager son projet de chemins de fer. Des événements diplomatiques récents ont montré que la Russie et la France se donnent la main dans la question Orientale. Ce fait démontre, entr'autres choses, la perspicacité prophétique de l'auteur d'une brochure sans date intitulée: "La Russie, l'Europe, et l'Orient," ayant paru il y a environ trois ans, et qui, bien qu'elle ait été peu remarquée à cette époque, ne manque certes pas de mérite. La brochure est due à la plume d'un des Juges au Tribunal International Égyptien et révèle le profond penseur. Il nous serait impossible de résumer ici toute la pensée de l'auteur, mais nous pouvons faire observer que des réflexions semblables aux siennes ont pu surgir pendant ces derniers jours dans l'esprit des hommes d'État Ottomans. S'il en a été ainsi, ces réflexions amèneraient des conclusions pratiques, telles que, par exemple, d'éviter tout contrat hâtif pour les chemins de fer d'Asie avec un Syndicat Français. Il est inutile d'examiner ici si M. Donon peut disposer des 750,000,000 de francs requis pour cette entreprise, c'est là son affaire. Mais on peut demander si, en présence du groupement politique tout récemment révélé, le projet Français offre la meilleure des combinaisons, et c'est là l'affaire de la Porte. Quant à la question générale de la construction des voies ferrées en Asie, le Gouvernement Ottoman ne doit pas s'en inquiéter. Tout ce qu'il faut, c'est que la Porte fasse connaître ce qu'elle veut, qu'elle présente un projet au bon endroit et les chemins de fer seront construits. La seule difficulté est que la Porte ne fait pas connaître ce qu'elle veut et que les hommes du premier ordre ne veulent pas employer leur temps à le chercher. Le système grâce auquel on obtient en Turquie les concessions d'entreprises industrielles jouit d'une réputation qui éloigne les gens qui pourraient le mieux servir les intérêts de l'Empire en lui procurant un réseau complet de chemins de fer en Asie. Il s'ensuit que les

financiers sérieux et les ingénieurs qui sont incontestablement à même d'exécuter l'œuvre dont la Turquie a besoin ne viendront pas dans le pays en mission explorative. Mais si la Porte voulait faire savoir à un homme capable et compétent quelles sont les lignes qu'elle veut faire construire, et quelles conditions elle offre à cet effet, la conclusion du contrat ne se ferait pas attendre. Les capitaux abondent et sont surtout disponibles pour toute entreprise tendant à développer le commerce. Ce qui retarde l'œuvre des chemins de fer d'Asie, c'est que la Porte laisse l'initiative aux spéculateurs en concessions, au lieu d'adopter et de proclaimer, en fait de chemins de fer, une politique raisonnable et pratique de nature à attirer à son aide les plus puissantes spécialités que l'Europe possède pour cette sorte d'entreprises. M. Donon occupe assurément une certaine position dans le monde financier, de même que M. Erlanger, qui est le principal appui financier d'un autre projet plus modeste. Toutefois, ils ne sont ni l'un ni l'autre des financiers du tout premier ordre, et il dépend uniquement de la Turquie de placer l'entreprise de ses chemins de fer entre les mains d'hommes du premier ordre. Bref, si l'on songe à des récents événements politiques, fort suggestifs, comme on dit, le projet Français, prôné par M. Donon, paraît exiger de mûres réflexions. Quoi qu'il en soit, la Porte pourrait voir cette œuvre mieux accomplie, son crédit plus promptement relevé, et la confiance à son égard bien plus grande sur les marchés Européens, en confiant l'entreprise à des hommes du premier ordre. Il n'existe pas la moindre difficulté à cet égard. Il est uniquement nécessaire, nous le répétons encore une fois, que la Porte dise ce qu'elle veut en fait de chemins de fer et quelles sont les conditions qu'elle entend offrir. Lorsque les grands financiers et les hommes de haute compétence constateront que le terrain est solide, ils n'hésiteront pas à se présenter et à marcher de l'avant.

No. 2.

War Office to Foreign Office.—(*Received November 5.*)

(Secret.)

Sir, *War Office, November 4*, 1887.

I AM directed by the Secretary of State for War to acknowledge the receipt of the letter addressed by Sir Villiers Lister to the Deputy Quartermaster-General on the 27th August last, requesting to be favoured with any observations that Major-General Brackenbury may have to offer on the inclosed Memorandum by Her Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople, relative to the different British schemes for the construction of railways in Asia Minor.

In reply, I am to forward to you, for the information of Lord Salisbury, two Memoranda upon this subject, one by Major-General Brackenbury, and the other by Captain Leverson, R.E., of the Intelligence Branch of this Office.

I have, &c.

(Signed) RALPH THOMPSON.

Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

Memorandum by Major-General Brackenbury.

(Secret.)

SIR W. WHITE, in his Memorandum, states that Mr. Chamberlain advised the Sultan "to appoint a Commission of foreign engineers, to be recommended by their Governments, who would work out a regular practical scheme of a network of railways for Asiatic Turkey, with accurate statistical Tables of the income which might be derived from such lines." Sir W. White adds that, in his opinion, "it is highly desirable that Her Majesty's Government should call for such a preparatory scheme from our own Intelligence Department, who would no doubt be able to give valuable confidential advice as to what it is desirable for us to support, and what to eschew, with regard to these railways."

It would not, I fear, be possible for the Intelligence Branch of the War Office to prepare such a regular practical scheme or such statistical Tables; nor would such a duty come within the sphere of those objects for which this Branch was created.

Sir W. White, in his Memorandum, however, makes the two following statements, on both of which it comes within the province of this Branch to offer some remarks:—

"Turkish railways in Asia are a subject of primary importance to us, not only commercially, but also politically and strategically."

"Our main interest lies in a railway line joining the port of Alexandretta with some place on the Persian Gulf, and taking in the points of most importance in Asia."

A short time since I should have agreed with Sir W. White that railways in Asia Minor were a subject of primary importance to us strategically, for I hold a firm belief that the best way for us to fight Russia when the time comes would be by the aid of the Turkish army in Trans-Caucasia, and I recently held an equally firm belief that our money would, should occasion arise, be freely and successfully spent to obtain the services of that army. But in view of Lord Salisbury's opinion, expressed in his despatch of the 26th August to the Secretary of State for War, that it is as certain as any political forecast can be that in a war with Russia Great Britain will never have command of the Turkish army, I fail to see what strategical importance there can be to this nation in railways in Asia Minor, for I take it nothing can be more certain than that we shall never send troops into Asiatic Turkey except as the allies of the Turks against Russia.

Then, as regards the line in which our main interest is said by Sir W. White to lie, it appears to me that, speaking always from the strategical point of view, the Euphrates Valley line, or any other line from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, has lost much of its importance. Were such a line created, its value to us for military purposes would depend upon two factors: friendly neutrality of a Turkey sufficiently strong to protect itself against Russia, and willing to allow us to use the line for the passage of troops; and the complete command of the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf, without which it is useless. If we were in a position to command the alliance of Turkey and of Persia in a war against Russia, I should attach the utmost importance to a railway from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf; but Persia has slipped out of our hands; and Lord Salisbury's despatch implies, if I read it aright, that the game is up in regard to Turkey.

So long as we have complete command of the Mediterranean, we can use the Suez Canal, and if that is blocked, the railways through Egypt; and I think the small gain of time between the Mediterranean and Kurâchi, which is the sole remaining advantage to be gained for us by such a railway, is not of sufficient value to make this line of primary importance to Great Britain under existing political conditions.

Assuming it, however, to be still Great Britain's object that the absorption of Asiatic Turkey by Russia should be delayed, the question arises whether the construction of a railway such as that projected by Sir R. Stephenson, supported by Mr. Bax-Ironside, in his despatch of the 29th March last, and recommended, as I understand, by Mr. V. Caillard to the Sultan, or the Alt-Scefelder line, which Sir W. White, in his despatch of the 16th ultimo, hopes will now be carried through, will hasten or delay that absorption.

Both of these projects have for their chief feature a main line running from the Sea of Marmora parallel to the Russo-Turkish frontier. But Sir R. Stephenson's proposed line runs much nearer to that frontier, passing through Sivas, Kharput, and Van, to the Persian frontier at Khotour; while the Alt-Scefelder line passes by Angora and Kaisarieh to Diarbekir.

Now, a railway running parallel to and not far from the frontier is considered necessary for strategical purposes by European States possessing highly organized armies and matured plans of mobilization, and numerous lines by which their troops can be brought with great facility to the frontier—for it facilitates concentration at any one threatened point.

But for a country in such a backward state of military organization as Turkey, fighting alone against so powerful a nation as Russia, it is an open question, to my mind, whether a railway such as Sir R. Stephenson's would not be captured by Russia at her next advance of frontier, and then become in her hands a powerful instrument for further aggression in the direction of the Sea of Marmora.

The Alt-Scefelder line seems less open to this objection, being further removed from the frontier.

(Signed) HENRY BRACKENBURY,
Major-General, D.A.G.

Intelligence Branch, War Office,
September 7, 1887.

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Memorandum by Captain Leverson, R.E., on the Strategical Considerations involved in the question of Railways in Asia Minor, not excluding the possibility of combined action by Great Britain and Turkey against Russia.

FROM a strategical point of view the question of Asia Minor railways may be broadly considered under two headings, viz.:—

1. As affecting our communications with India and the East.
2. As affecting military operations in Turkey in Asia and Trans-Caucasia.

Railway communication between the Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf is a well-worn theme, and one that has been constantly debated in latter years. In 1871 and 1872 it formed the subject of a Parliamentry inquiry. The Report of the Committee, while pointing out the commercial and political advantages to be expected from the construction of such a railway, shows considerable diversity of opinion as to its value for the conveyance of English troops to the East. Under ordinary conditions the Suez Canal route by which men can be sent without transhipment from the point of departure to that of destination is undoubtedly preferable, especially where a large force is concerned. In the event of the Canal being blocked we have at present the railways through Egypt to fall back upon. The most, therefore, that can be said of a line through Asia Minor is that it would afford an additional and somewhat more rapid route to the East, but one far less convenient for military purposes than the one at present in use. The value of both routes depends, however, on our maintaining a complete supremacy in the Mediterranean. This we should undoubtedly be able to do in the event of Russia being our only foe, but in the not improbable contingency of some strong Maritime Power being allied with her against us, it is by no means impossible that the Mediterranean might become a *mare clausum* to our troop-ships. We should then have to look to the Cape and Canadian Pacific routes for our communications with the East.

Turning now to the question of the strategical value of railways in Asia Minor in the event of Turkey being engaged in hostilities, there appear to be three cases which may be considered, viz.:—

1. A war between Turkey and Russia.
2. A war in which Great Britain and Turkey fight on the one side, and Russia on the other, Great Britain maintaining complete supremacy in the Mediterranean.
3. A war in which Great Britain and Turkey fight on the one side, and Russia on the other, but in which Great Britain is debarred from using the Mediterranean for large convoys of troops.

The primary strategical object of the railways should be to enable the Turks to concentrate their troops at threatened points, and to move them from place to place as occasion required. This it appears would be best effected by a line or lines running through Asia Minor and connecting Constantinople with the principal military centres. Owing to their superior organization and greater state of preparedness for war, it may almost be looked upon as a certainty that the Russians would assume the offensive. In laying out the railways great care should therefore be taken to trace them so far from the frontier that they would run no risk of capture by an advance of the Russians immediately after the outbreak of hostilities.

As regards the western end of the main line, Scutari, or rather Haidar Pasha, the terminus of the existing railway to Ismidt, is protected by the fortifications of the Bosphorus on the one side, and by those of the Dardanelles on the other, but Mudania or some other port in the Sea of Marmora would afford a still more secure point of departure. The terminus, whether at Scutari or in the Sea of Marmora, would facilitate communication enormously between the capital and the distant portions of Asia Minor, and would render possible the transfer of troops from the European to the Asiatic theatre of war, and *vice versâ*.

A terminus on the Black Sea coast would be fraught with considerable danger, as it can no longer be assumed that if Turkey has to fight Russia single-handed she will be able to retain the command of that sea.

In the event of England being allied to Turkey, a line from Constantinople through Asia Minor would lose none of its importance.

Assuming, however, the Mediterranean to be still available for our transports, a point in or near the Gulf of Iskanderun would form a more convenient and safer base of operations, for an English army of operations, and one nearer to the probable scene of hostilities, than any point on the shores of the Sea of Marmora, and it would be desirable that the point selected should be connected by railway with the main line.

The eastern terminus of the main line should certainly be on the Persian Gulf, or at some point on the Euphrates or Tigris up to which the river is navigable for large vessels, not merely because through communication would thus be established, but because it would give us another convenient base from which to act in the event of it being possible to dispatch an expeditionary force from India or our great South African or Australian Colonies.

In the event of our not being able to operate in Asia Minor from the Mediterranean, it can hardly be conceived that a terminus in or near the Gulf of Iskanderun would be a source of danger to Turkey, for the Turkish fleet, assisted by ours, with Malta and Cyprus available as coaling stations, would almost certainly be able to prevent a landing in force by any other Power.

Were we shut out from the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf would then become our only base for operations in Asia Minor.

To sum up, it appears that the lines which would be of most use to Turkey, and at the same time, free from danger, would be a main line from Constantinople through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf, connected with another from some selected point on the Mediterranean. Whatever lines are constructed should be safe from sudden capture by Russia, and those that approach anywhere near the frontier should be at right angles and not parallel to it.

(Signed) JULIAN J. LEVERSON,
Captain, R.E., D.A.A.G.

(For D.A.G.)
(Signed) C. W. B. BELL, *Lieutenant-Colonel.*
Intelligence Branch, October 13, 1887.

I have read this Minute, and I concur in the views expressed in it.
(Signed) H. BRACKENBURY, *D.A.G.*
October 27, 1887.

No. 3.

Sir W. White to the Marquis of Salisbury.—(*Received January* 25.)

(No. 3. Very Secret.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, January* 7, 1888.

WITH my despatch No. 374 of the 10th ultimo, marked Very Secret, I had the honour to return certain most interesting Memorandums kindly sent me for perusal on the subject of Turkish Asiatic railways in general.

As that subject is one of very great interest, I asked Major Trotter, C.B., to give it his attention from a military point of view, and I beg to inclose a copy of the Secret Memorandum with which he has supplied me, with some politico-military considerations which appear to me to be deserving attention.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. A. WHITE.

Inclosure in No. 3.

Memorandum by Major Trotter.

(Secret.)

I LEARN, from a confidential communication made to me by Sir William White, that, in considering the general question of the defence of India against Russian aggression, it has been postulated by the highest authorities that we must not count on an alliance with Turkey, and that this decision has been used in influential quarters as a reason for our abstention from promoting the construction of railways in Asiatic Turkey.

I would, however, venture to submit certain considerations as showing very good reasons why we should still interest ourselves in the promotion of railway enterprise in Asia Minor.

While admitting that unfortunately the diplomatic history of the last few years (especially of that period when we were apparently on the verge of war with Russia anent the Penjdeh incident) makes the above-quoted decision a necessary one,

and that we must be prepared to meet Russia on the Afghan frontier entirely independently of any assistance to be received from Turkey, yet, on the other hand, the enormous advantage to be derived by us from an alliance with Turkey is so obvious that there is no doubt that, should we find ourselves a twar with Russia, we would at the last moment make every effort to draw Turkey to our side. It must be borne in mind that the great preparations we are making in India, and the still greater preparations that we shall probably be called upon to make, are confined to *defensive* war, and that our military authorities, both at home and in India, appear to be agreed on the point that Herat and all the Afghan Turkestan country to the north of the Hindu Kush Mountains would, at the outbreak of hostilities, have to be abandoned, and would become an easy and perhaps not unwilling prey to the Muscovite armies. Assuming that, in alliance with the Afghans, we take up a defensive position at Candahar and in Afghanistan proper, and that we successfully resist the first onslaught of the Russians, it is obvious that we are always liable to fresh attacks. The Russians, with their enormous numbers, can afford to lose whole *armies*, and no sacrifice of men would be allowed to stand in the way of fresh attacks, the only way of obviating which would be the partial breaking up of the Russian Empire. Once hostilities commenced in Asia, the war would probably last for years, and there would be no truce between us and Russia until one of the two countries has been completely exhausted, if not decisively crushed. We should never be safe or free from attack until we had succeeded in driving the Russians away from all their recently conquered territories in Central Asia. I think no one who has studied the question can conceive it possible that in single combat with Russia, unaided by other alliances, could we effect this, or break up or materially weaken the Russian power in Asia. Our only hope would lie in European alliances, and that of Turkey under certain conditions, and provided we were prepared to subsidize them most liberally, would perhaps be the easiest and one of the most efficacious to obtain.

I do not lose sight of the fact that, if Turkey were our only ally, Russia would probably only act on the defensive in Central Asia; in other words, would for a time leave us alone, and would devote her energies to crushing Turkey, and that the latter would almost certainly decline to join us unless further assisted by some other European alliance, which in the existing state of European politics it might perhaps be not very difficult to obtain.

In a very few years' time, if the new Recruiting Law and the new organization of reserves be thoroughly carried out—and there is every indication on the Sultan's part of a wish to do so—Turkey would be capable of putting under arms, including all reserves, 800,000 men; and if we were prepared to pay for their mobilization and maintenance (and in case of a life and death struggle with Russia we should undoubtedly be wise to do so), we should have as auxiliaries a very large army, provided with 500,000 magazine rifles, and at least 1,000 of Krupp's field guns, and without sending a single regiment to Turkey we might cause a diversion which would materially and effectively aid us in our operations in Central Asia, not to speak of the enormous moral assistance which I believe the alliance of the Caliph would be to us in our efforts to raise the populations of the Central Asian Khanates against their Russian masters; a result to which I am of opinion we shall ultimately be forced, if war should unfortunately break out between us and Russia, in order to insure our quiet possession of India.

Apart, then, from the political necessity of endeavouring to maintain the best possible relations with the Sultan, a question into which it is not my province to enter, it would appear to be our wisest policy to do everything that we can to strengthen the Ottoman Empire, especially where we can do so without sacrificing our own interests, for it must be borne in mind that everything that is done to weaken Turkey is so much strength added to Russia, whose policy is, as many people believe, and as General Ignatieff once said openly to an influential Turkish Pasha, "to drive the English out of India with the help of the Ottoman flag."

I would venture to submit that the foregoing remarks tend to show that it would still be a wise political policy on our part to promote railway construction in Asia Minor, especially as it has been shown in Captain Leverson's (Secret) Memorandum on the strategical considerations involved in the question of railways in Asia Minor, of date 13th October, 1887, that the lines which would be of the most use to Turkey, and *at the same time free from danger to us*, would be a main line from Constantinople through Asia Minor to the Persian Gulf, connected with another from some selected point on the Mediterranean.

Captain Leverson, however, in his Memorandum, did not consider the case of England being engaged in war with Russia single-handed, Turkey being neutral, in

which case I think there could be no doubt England would be absolutely powerless to operate against Russia by land in Trans-Caucasia, and, for fear of offending Russia, Turkey would be compelled to close the Dardanelles against our ships of war, as, indeed, she is bound by International Treaty to do, and which, backed up by Austria and Germany, she was actually preparing to do at the time that hostilities appeared imminent between England and Russia about the Penjdeh incident.

In this case also, the railway from Constantinople through the heart of Asia Minor would still be advantageous to us, as it would be a great source of strength to the Turks, and make them less afraid of hostile action on the part of Russia.

The through line from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf might also be of great use to us in the improbable, but not altogether impossible, event of our being engaged in hostile operations against Turkey; and although I regard such an idea with horror, on the afore-mentioned grounds, that everything that weakens Turkey strengthens Russia, such a railway would give us access to Kurdistan and Mesopotamia, the Kurdish and Arab inhabitants of which are bitterly discontented with Turkish rule, and would probably cordially welcome foreign help to enable them to free themselves of the burden.

It is this last consideration, doubtless, that influences the Ottoman authorities in the determination they have undoubtedly come to, although they have never publicly admitted the fact, never to allow the construction of a through line from Syria to the Persian Gulf until the overland line from Constantinople to Diarbekir shall be completed.

(Signed) HENRY TROTTER, *Major, R.E.,*
Military Attaché.

Constantinople, January 3, 1888.